



**CCB/EYE CARE CARIBBEAN  
CARIBBEAN COUNCIL FOR THE BLIND  
&  
THE FOUNDATION FOR EYE CARE IN THE CARIBBEAN**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**“Make Eye Health Services available to the most vulnerable in the Region.”**

**St John’s, Antigua and Barbuda, March 12th, 2012:** An appeal has been made for Caribbean Governments to make eye health services affordable to the bottom fifty (50%) of their populations.

In a message to mark World Glaucoma Week, the Chief Executive Officer of the **Caribbean Council for the Blind (CCB)**, Arvel Grant, noted that in the wake of the current global financial crisis, regional governments must give those most at risk access to eye health services within the public sector.

“Since poverty and under development are leading contributors to blindness and visual impairment, the current global financial crisis, demands that Caribbean Governments take extraordinary steps to give the bottom 50% of their populations access to eye health services in the public health sector; creating higher levels of accessibility, availability and affordability to those most at risk.”

“Based on the findings of the Barbados Eye Study (BES), up to seven percent (7%) of Caribbean Populations could be affected by Glaucoma. That means that (in the English-speaking Caribbean alone) up to four hundred and twenty thousand (420,000) persons could be affected by the condition.”

According to Mr. Grant, one way of facilitating that national habit, is by “encouraging the development of programmes to make eye glasses more affordable, accessible and available. Given the high prevalence of persons (over 35) requiring spectacles, to see normally, such a service represents a valid “gate-way” opportunity for regular eye examinations.”

As we focus on Glaucoma this year, National Governments, Civil Society, families and individuals, should resolve to make access to basic eye health services by all, a development priority,” he said.

World Glaucoma Week 2012 highlights Glaucoma as one of the leading causes of incurable blindness. The occasion is under-scored by the fact that, once diagnosed, patients with glaucoma may need to maintain medical treatment for the rest of their lives,” he said.

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Open Angle Glaucoma is a leading cause of incurable blindness in the Caribbean. Persons who are: thirty five (35) years or older; have had injury to one or both eyes; are of African descent; has one or more parent or grandparent diagnosed with Glaucoma, are at enhanced risk of developing the condition.

Individuals having one or more of those risk factors, should have their eye examined for Glaucoma (at least) once every year, or as often as their Ophthalmologists recommend.

Contact: Arvel L Grant, (CSW, B.Sc.–SW (Hons.), DPA, MPH)  
(268) 462 6369

#### **PURPOSE**

**“Preventing blindness and visual impairment; while restoring sight and creating opportunities for persons whose sight cannot be restored.”**

**Lower All Saints Road - P.O. Box 1517 - Antigua, and Barbuda, West Indies**

**Tel: 1-(268)-462-4111/462-6369/562-2216; Fax: (268)-462-6371**